Meeting occurred via WebEx Teleconferencing

Chair Scott Markow called meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Scott Markow, (Chair), Bianca Chang, Kui Zhao, Gabriel Terrasa (Corresponding Secretary) Joan Hash, Jonah Hornum (Vice Chair) Bob Ford, Lynda Earle, Tiffany Releford, Peter Hwang, Sahara Ukaegbu, (Student commissioner)

Absent:

Staff Present: Yolanda Sonnier

Legal Counsel: Melissa Goldmeier

I. PUBLIC FORUM
   No one from the public forum, however Nina Basu pending commissioner joined the meeting.

II. APPROVAL OF JANUARY MINUTES
   Scott asked if everyone had the opportunity to review the minutes or if anyone had any other changes to the February minutes. Gab moved to approve the February minutes, seconded by Kui, abstained by Lynda Earle, motion passed.

III. PRESENTATION ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN HOWARD COUNTY
   Ms. Andrea Nunez, manager for Office of Human Trafficking Prevention for DCRS Howard County, presented a PowerPoint presentation on Human Trafficking. The presentation consisted of slides that explained Exploitation, Sex Trafficking, Labor Trafficking, Maryland State Law, and how difficult it is to spot trafficking accurately and the signs to look for including, limited freedom, lack of control, and work conditions.

   Ms. Nunez stated there is a high state of misconception of what trafficking is. The Federal definition defines trafficking as the use of force, fraud or coercion by forced labor or commercial sex. Or any person under the age of 18 engaged in commercial sex acts regardless of the use of force, fraud or coercion. Trafficking has been a Federal Crime in the U.S. since passing the Trafficking Victims Protection Act in 2000. Labor Trafficking with regards to Maryland State law was passed a few years ago, there are currently no cases on the criminal side of this.

   There are circumstances where there is no coercing, no violence, no one being kept against their will, but could be a psychologically controlling situation. In the workplace labor trafficking could include excessive long and or unusual working hours, recruitment through false promises about the nature and work conditions of the job, unpaid or paid
very little. These acts violate state, county and local labor laws. Forced labor trafficking could take place in different settings including farms, construction work sites, factories, even homes. Ms. Nunez also provided the contact information to report trafficking concerns or general questions about trafficking. Lynda stated Pre-COVID their rumored to be human trafficking at Columbia Mall, however she never noticed anything of the sort. Lynda asked how frequently the trafficking was if it happened and how has the numbers changed since COVID. Ms. Nunez stated she is not aware of any cases connected with the Columbia Mall.

Bianca asked if there is a plan to educate or provide training to staff or employees or businesses around the highly targeted areas of trafficking. Ms. Nunez stated they have reached out to a few hotels to provide training, and training for county workers. Sahara asked at what point does it become labor trafficking, in restaurants for example; if a server receives low pay, or tips only. Ms. Nunez stated to look at the circumstances of that individual that makes that person feel like they are trapped or cannot just quit or escape.

IV. CHAIR’S REPORT
Scott stated they are still looking for speakers for July, October, November and December. The date changed for the HRC awards Ceremony to Wednesday October 19th due to the Jewish Holiday. The October 19th date was discussed amongst the commissioner by email and all agreed.

CB18-2022 extends the time someone can file a complaint for employment discrimination from 6 month to 300 days. This is to be consistent with current EEOC regulations. Scott asked if the HRC wanted to submit testimony or to testify in support of this bill. Joan made motion that Scott put in written testimony in support of the bill, seconded by Kui. Motion passed.

Sahara, Scott, Bob, Yolanda and Claudia met with Sgt. John Lloyd and Michael Yetter from the SRO office on March 7th to support Sahara’s project of students Bill of Rights pamphlet on how to deal with SRO’s and their roles in the schools. Scott spoke about the purpose of having SRO’s in the schools, how SRO’s connect with students, what the difference is between SRO’s and regular police officers. Scott mentioned it would be interesting for the commissioners to find out what the school security systems are and what they do and their role in addressing Hate Bias Incidents. Scott asked if this is something the Hate Crimes Committee would be willing to take on. Bob stated the committee will discuss it during their upcoming meeting.

Scott mentioned having an in-person meeting starting in April. Yolanda mentioned also having a hybrid option, if everyone did not feel comfortable being in person. Joan mentioned possibly waiting until May due to the new variant. Bob made motion to start in person meetings in May, seconded by Joan. Gab asked if the meeting would be in person only, Scott stated with a virtual option for anyone not comfortable. Lynda requested to make amendment to the motion that there be a virtual option. Bob approved the amendment, seconded by Joan. A poll was conducted all in favor of having an in-person meeting in May with a virtual option. Motion passed.
V. STUDENT’S REPORT
Sahara spoke about the meeting with the SRO Officers and the information that she learned. Each SRO’s approach and strategy is determined by the principal at that school which make it difficult in terms of having a uniformed approach while working on the pamphlet. Sahara mentioned the SRO officers expressed their concerns on how they are perceived by the public. Sahara stated instead of having a pamphlet laying around in different offices potentially having posters with QR codes that could link to the pamphlet to an online version and having a poster with main bullet points. Sahara stated she will have a meeting with her principal to see the school’s approach regarding SRO’s.

VI. COMMITTEE REPORTS
a. Outreach:
Kui stated she is continuing to update the annual report instead of waiting until the end of the year. Kui also mentioned trying to invite speakers for the monthly meetings. The committee would like to have Senator Clarence Lam for the May meeting since May is AAPI Heritage Month.

b. Awards Committee:
The committee met reviewed and updated the nomination questionnaire and submitted it to OHRE to be posted in survey monkey and used once the nomination period commences. The committee also reviewed and updated a proposed press release announcing the opening of nomination period. The awards ceremony is scheduled to take place October 19th, the venue will be Owen Brown Interfaith Center. The next meeting is April 20th at 7:00pm.

c. Nominating Committee:
Peter stated the County Executive has taken the committee’s recommendation to Re- appoint Gab. County Executive has decided to appoint Nina Basu to replace Mabrooka as commissioner.

d. Legislative Committee:
Scott mentioned CB18-2022 that was discussed during the Chairs Report. There has been a couple of new bills introduced at the state level but nothing currently to report. Yolanda spoke about House Bill 1256 to prevent discussing and teaching about discrimination, not to talk about sexism, racism, etc. in the school system. A hearing took place in the house on March 10th but currently no outcome.

VII. AD HOC COMMITTEE REPORTS
a. Social and Economic Justice:
Tiffany stated the committee does not have a report at this time.

b. Hate Crimes:
Bob is continuing to represent the HRC on Cove Maryland. Bob asked Yolanda to send
any HBI’s to the committee members. Yolanda mentioned the reports have been inconsistent and not received regularly but will follow up to ensure they are receiving the reports regularly.

c. **Public Education:**
   Gab stated nothing to report at this time.

VIII. **EXECUTIVE SECRETARY REPORT**
Yolanda stated the office had a Facebook live where a few commissioners joined to talk about what Women’s History month meant to them, and why it’s important to have women at the table on commissions such as HRC. Yolanda mentioned the office and partnership activities such as the celebration of Harriet Tubman 200 anniversary of her birth.

The human rights book discussion in conjunction with the Howard County Library. Lunch and Learn discussion on March 24th “Until I am Free”. Outreach staff will have a Train the Trainer with the Cove members on the Bystander Intervention and Cultural Awareness on April 5th. March 29th Women’s History Trivia at North Laurel 50+Center. April 9th Yolanda and Marla will be facilitating a workshop on Black Women and Activism with Hope Works. May 1st is the AAPI Heritage Month Celebration. Yolanda also mentioned the Equity Coordinator open position.

IX. **NEW BUSINESS/ANNOUNCEMENTS**
No new business or announcements, however Bob mentioned the county is accepting applications for the Police Accountability Board.

X. **ADJOURN**
Scott mentioned having a motion to adjourn. Bob made a motion to adjourn. Joan seconded. Motion passed without opposition.

Session ended at 8:49 pm.

**Next Meeting:** April 21, 2022 at 7pm